

# Tom Kromkowski

*State Representative • District 7*

Spring, 2000

Dear Friend,

The 2000 session of the Indiana General Assembly adjourned on March 3.

We passed several significant pieces of legislation, including a plan to distribute the funds Indiana will receive from the tobacco settlement and increased benefits for workers severely injured on the job. We also adjusted the unemployment compensation system, making improvements for both workers and employers.

I have detailed several new laws in this newsletter and have included some other information that you might find useful.

In the coming months, I will be working on interim study committees. These committees allow legislators the opportunity to explore subjects in greater detail than permitted during session.

Please contact my office at 1-800-382-9842 if you have any questions or concerns regarding state government.

Sincerely,



How To Reach  
Representative

**Tom  
Kromkowski**

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# Health care is primary use of tobacco settlement

Certainly one of the biggest achievements of the 2000 legislative session was passage of legislation that sets up a system to allocate more than \$4 billion Indiana will be receiving from the national tobacco settlement over the next 25 years. The funds will go to health care services, tobacco prevention programs and assistance for senior citizens on lower incomes who have trouble purchasing prescription drugs.



*Rep. Kromkowski debates legislation on the House floor.*

In the first year alone, \$35 million will be dedicated toward health care programs, with an emphasis on tobacco education and prevention. Another \$20 million will be used to help seniors on low incomes purchase needed prescription drugs. Community health centers will receive \$15 million in program support, along with a one-time-only appropriation of \$10 million to make physical improvements to facilities.

## ***Seniors also will see benefits***

Senior citizens on lower incomes should not have to choose between buying food or the prescription drugs they need to remain healthy. Thanks to the legislation allocating money from the national tobacco settlement, they won't have to make that decision.

The final bill includes \$20 million to help low income seniors purchase prescription drugs. From my visits around the district, this is one of the most pressing concerns among older Hoosiers. Some people even have been forced to drive as far as Canada to get these drugs at a more affordable rate.

# Helping working men and women

Around 90 percent of Indiana workers who receive a disabling injury in a workplace accident will see their compensation increase close to 50 percent. There are improvements in the one-time cash payments made to a person who suffers a permanent partial impairment in a workplace accident. The change will help any worker determined to have up to the 30th degree of impairment, which includes around 90 percent of all injured employees. Weekly disability payments also will increase.

Indiana workers who lose their jobs will see unemployment compensation increase by 33 percent over the next three years. The maximum benefit will increase from \$252 to \$336 by July 2002. To finance the increase, the state will use a larger share of the unemployment trust fund, a move that will cut premium payments by employers by nearly \$80 million the next two years.

## Increasing Access to Insurance

I am pleased to announce that legislation enacted this session will go a long way to increasing insurance coverage for a number of individuals.

One change involving dental health maintenance organizations will mandate that licensed dentists be in charge of making decisions about dental claims. This bill is part of an ongoing effort by the General Assembly to place medical decision-making back into the hands of doctors.

Other legislation requires HMOs to cover patients for colorectal cancer testing based on standards established by the American Cancer Society. People found to be morbidly obese will receive coverage for necessary treatment, including surgery.

# Medicaid eligibility definition adjusted

Currently, Indiana requires that a person suffer from a life-long disability in order to receive Medicaid Disability assistance. The General Assembly approved legislation that would replace the life-long requirement with a four-year disability requirement.

Indiana has the most restrictive Medicaid Disability definition in the nation. Forty-eight other states require that a person suffer from a disability for one year. New Hampshire is the only other state which requires a four- year disability.

With so many advances in health care, there is a treatment for almost every type of ailment. Medicaid was designed to help needy individuals, but the current system excludes so many people from qualifying for the aid that most other states would offer them.

This is not an attempt to provide free health care to all Hoosiers. It simply modifies the restrictions just enough so that a few more deserving individuals are able to qualify.

## IHSAA

The General Assembly addressed concerns about the Indiana High School Athletic Association through legislation that creates a panel to review appeals of rulings made by the IHSAA.

The panel will consist of parents, high school principals and athletic directors. Issues that they will rule on include the eligibility of student athletes. In the past, appeals of IHSAA decisions often led to lengthy, expensive court fights. Now, the panel will address appeals and save students and parents time and money.

# State web site an information gateway

The state web site provides a great deal of information about state government, the legislative process and other related items. The main site at [www.state.in.us](http://www.state.in.us) offers a nice starting point to explore government in Indiana.

From that starting point, you can visit the home pages of elected state officials and state agencies. In addition, several premium services are available for a monthly fee.

I encourage you to visit my web site at [www.state.in.us/R7](http://www.state.in.us/R7) and explore various items related to the legislature and our district.



*A screen shot of my legislative homepage.*

## Receive legislative updates via e-mail

Several people have indicated to me that they would like to receive e-mail updates on legislative issues and other issues important to our district. I am pleased to offer this service through my legislative office.

Simply e-mail or call my office and I will add you to this list. I am excited about the technological advances over the past few years that allow you nearly instant access to legislative news and information.

Sign up to receive legislative updates via email at  
<http://www.state.in.us/R7>

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